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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 TOKYO 000907

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [KPAO](#) [JA](#)
SUBJECT: ANTI-SEMITISM IN JAPAN

Classified By: Classified By: Charge James P. Zumwalt, reasons 1.4 (b, d).

11. (C) Summary: Japanese anti-Semitism may be the ultimate oxymoron since Japan is a Shintoist/Buddhist society with virtually no Jewish minority and no history of discrimination against Jews as an ethnic or religious group. However, anti-Semitic attitudes and anti-Jewish conspiracy theories are accepted by surprisingly many Japanese. The idea of Jewish economic, political and intellectual "omnipotence" has gained an audience among Japanese who are not otherwise anti-Semitic. Anti-Semitism in Japan is manifested through books, magazines, public appearances by anti-Semitic writers, and several internet sites. The Israeli Embassy in Tokyo notes that what is found in Japan isn't "classical anti-Semitism," but a "combination of unfamiliarity, a tendency amongst a few to give credence to conspiracy theories about Jewish power, and some issues that are politically sensitive." End Summary.

Shocking Remarks on National TV

12. (C) Many western observers of Japan are familiar with the heroic WWII Japanese diplomat, Chiune Sugihara, known as "Japan's Schindler," who while stationed in Lithuania saved up to 6,000 Jewish refugees from the Nazis by issuing transit visas to Japan against explicit orders from Tokyo not to issue any visas. Despite this moving example of Japanese humanitarianism, there nonetheless has been a minor current of anti-Semitism in Japan, made all the more ironic by the minuscule Jewish population here. While the vast majority of the population seems ignorant or indifferent to the subject, two recent incidents of anti-Semitic remarks on national television programs showed how anti-Semitism can rear its head here.

13. (C) The first incident occurred on a national television talk show, TV-Asahi's Sunday Project, hosted by veteran journalist and interviewer Soichiro Tahara. Tahara's remark, which prompted a statement of criticism from the Simon Wiesenthal Center, took place during an interview with former Foreign Minister Makiko Tanaka. Tahara had raised the arrest of Tanaka's late father, former Prime Minister Kakuei Tanaka, in connection with the Lockheed scandal in the mid-1970s and the recent arrest of an aide to Democratic President Ichiro Ozawa for illegally receiving political donations.

14. (C) Tahara, who has written a book alleging that the Lockheed scandal was a CIA plot against former PM Tanaka,

remarked, "Mr. Tanaka was done in by the Jews, and Ozawa was done in by them too." Confronted by Jewish civic groups, TV-Asahi reportedly sent a delegation to the Israeli Embassy to deny that Tahara had used the word on the program. In discussions with the Israeli Embassy, and when responding to a letter from Embassy Tokyo, TV-Asahi claimed that Tahara had used a different word altogether -- yuuzai (guilty), but that word does not fit grammatically into the sentence and cannot be heard when a tape of the program is examined. The issue attracted virtually no attention from the Japanese media and has since died down. Incidentally, Kakuei Tanaka, upon being released from prison, reportedly quipped the "Jews did me in," setting off conspiratorial ripples, so Tahara may have been repeating something that was already in his book on Tanaka.

15. (C) The second recent anti-Semitic incident was much more surprising since it came from Atsuyuki Sassa, a former policeman and one-time national-security aide (1986-89) to then-Prime Minister Nakasone who is now well known as a commentator on crisis management and defense issues. Appearing on a Saturday morning NTV infotainment program on March 21, the former chief of Japan's National Security Council, in referring to the issue of massive bonus payments by AIG to its executives, as well as the use of private jets by the heads of the "Big Three" companies, said: "There were terrible capitalists around the 18th century. I know it is bad to say this, but most of them were Jews. It is the Jews who are doing awful things today." When the program host immediately told Sassa that his remarks were out of line, Sassa insisted, "But that is my view."

TOKYO 00000907 002 OF 003

16. (C) While the program host later apologized to viewers for Sassa's remarks and said that the program could not overlook his "discriminatory" comments, Sassa went on to say that he would take full responsibility for his remarks, stressing, "I will stand by my statement at any time." This second incident, which can be found on some English blogs, was also ignored by the Japanese press.

17. (C) (Note: Sassa has long been a favorite among Washington U.S.-Japan alliance managers for his strong support of the alliance. He recently (3/25, p. 7) wrote a strong commentary for the Sankei Shimbun on U.S.-Japan cooperation to meet the missile-launch threat from North Korea. He is considered to be a realistic and knowledgeable commentator on U.S.-Japanese security issues and frequently participates in conferences and other scholarly gatherings. End Note.)

Anti-Semitic Literature

18. (SBU) Anti-Semitic books and articles occasionally appear in Japan even if these views are not widely shared. There are also several rabidly anti-Semitic websites in Japanese spread anti-Semitic conspiracy theories (e.g., that Jews masterminded 9/11). While most such literature tends to favor conspiracy theories of international Jewish control, even citing such fabrications as the early 20th century Protocols of the Elders of Zion, writings that deny the Holocaust or defend Nazi pogroms can also be found. One internationally notorious incident occurred in 1995 with the publication of an article by then 38-year old physician Masanori Nishioka titled. "There Were No Nazi 'Gas Chambers'," in the February issue of Marco Polo, a slick, 250,000-circulation monthly aimed at a young audience, published by Bungei Shunju, one of Japan's most influential publishing house.

19. (SBU) In the face of protests from Jewish civic groups, the Israeli government, and threats by advertisers like Volkswagen to pull their advertising, the publishers caved in, fired the editor, and closed down the magazine. An

American journalist who had been tracking anti-Semitic publications in Japan said the article was "a rehash of revisionist writing in the United States which tries to deny the Holocaust. He (Nishioka) never visited Poland or Germany before writing the article and the editors never checked his story."

¶10. (SBU) One of most infamous peddlers of Jewish conspiracy theories has been Masami Uno, who has written such books as "The Invisible Empire - Jewish Zionists Control the World." Uno needless to say denies the Holocaust and even claims that the diary of Anne Frank was a hoax. With conspiracy theorists like Uno, just about everything that goes wrong in the world, including the current financial crisis, can be blamed on the Jews.

Anti-Semitism on the Left

¶11. (SBU) Although anti-Semitic propaganda seems found mainly among right-wing nationalists, the same conspiracy-minded prejudices can be found in leftist publications, as well. Shukan Kinyobi (Weekly Friday) had a special collection of articles in its January 16 issue on "The danger of Obama" that excoriated the President and his policies. One of the features was a two-page spread with photos, names, and comments of the "Jewish lobby" that allegedly controls the Obama administration. The magazine characterized out Jews who were appointed or slated for appointments in the Obama administration as a cabal that would now run the U.S. government. The collection subsequently came out as a book available from Amazon Japan.

Ultrationalist Cartoonist Rants at Jews

¶12. (C) Blatant anti-Semitism can be found in the works of the political cartoonist Yoshinori Kobayashi, an ultrationalist whose books of polemical cartoons sell well

TOKYO 00000907 003 OF 003

among young readers. He has long been a frequent guest on a TV-Asahi all-night debate show on television and other talk shows, where his outrageous political views no doubt are expected to raise the ratings of the programs. He is a regular contributor to Sapio, a nationalist biweekly magazine that targets young readers.

¶13. (C) Kobayashi uses his cartoons as a venue for vilifying persons or groups that he despises. His anti-American sentiment is a constant theme, sometimes graphically and horrifically depicted in his drawings of war scenes, ranging from WWII to the Iraq War. Kobayashi's first best-seller "Sensouron," or "on War," which came out in 1998, presents Japan as a liberator in WWII of other Asian countries and dismisses as nonsense some of Japan's wartime atrocities such as the Nanjing Massacre and the military's coercive recruitment of comfort-women (sex slaves).

¶14. (C) Kobayashi's book contains a strong passage that reveals his hatred of the Jews. Singling out Dr. J. Robert Oppenheimer, the scientist who directed the Manhattan Project that led to the development of the first atomic bomb, Kobayashi used him as a scapegoat for all Jews, who he accused of masterminding the atomic bombing of Japan. The following chilling passage comes from the book: "The director of the Manhattan Project was Dr. Oppenheimer, a Jew. He did the Devil's work. Japan saved up to 20,000 Jews during the war, but Jews built the atom bomb and lent their hands to Japan's Holocaust."

No Violence, Discrimination Against Jews

¶15. (C) There are no reports of violence or discrimination against Jews in Japan. According to Arie Grosman, Coordinator for the Jewish Community Center in Tokyo, although protests at the Israeli Embassy itself tend to peak around periods of Middle East disturbance, "at a personal level there are no acts of anti-Semitism toward individuals. We do of course from time to time get threatening letters and post cards, but this is mostly when fighting is going on back home." According to Itamar Koen, Chief of Security at the Israeli Embassy in Tokyo, "I cannot say things are better or worse, in terms of the security of individual Jews in Japan. We are always concerned. But we do not have reports of attacks against individual Jews. At the recent protests at the Embassy against the Gaza operation, although some helmeted left-wing groups tried to participate, they were turned back by the police. In fact we have information that many of the protesters weren't Japanese and that much of the organizing for the protests was carried out by the Afghan, Pakistani, and Iranian embassies." Israel Strolov, a Political Officer at the Embassy summed it up this way: "What we find in Japan isn't classical anti-Semitism. It's a combination of unfamiliarity, a tendency amongst a few to give credence to conspiracy theories about Jewish power, and some issues that are politically sensitive."

ZUMWALT